

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 18 JANUARY 2012

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Wakefield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson) and Farrow (Opposition Spokesperson)

PART ONE

60. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

60(a) Declarations of Interests

60.1 There were none.

60(b) Exclusion of Press and Public

60.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

60.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda.

61. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

61.1 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 55.5. He asked how someone at Plumpton College could always be on site to risk assess people. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that the council would work with Plumpton College to appropriately risk assess people. The project was not fully progressed yet. The wording of this sentence would be amended (see resolution).

61.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn drew attention to paragraph 55.6, which referred to cash payments. He had now received this information.

- 61.3 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 1 December 2011 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member subject to an amendment to paragraph 55.5 last sentence which should read “Plumpton College was likely to be involved in an advisory capacity in risk assessing the site and in undertaking risk assessments prior to the project commencing.”

62. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

Ainsworth House Update

- 62.1 The Cabinet Member reported that the Council now had vacant possession of Ainsworth House, after it was squatted by a group of about 20 people. Contractors could now get on with the important job of demolishing the building and starting work to build much needed new family homes. She was pleased to announce that Kier Property (part of the Kier Group) was appointed as preferred contractor on 23 December 2011 following a 5 month procurement process. The Kier Group was one of the country's leading construction, services and property companies. The contract was being drawn up for signing and sealing by both parties by the end of the week (20th January 2012). Kier would then take formal possession of the site at the agreed time.
- 62.2 The Tenants Working Group, who had been involved with every aspect of this project from the start, would be liaising closely with Kier during the build process to ensure that the 15 new environmentally friendly council homes met the council's key requirements.

HRA Empty properties

- 62.3 The Cabinet Member reported that the council would be bringing forward 112 long term empty HRA homes not yet batched to go to the LDV for refurbishment and occupancy on a temporary basis to mitigate revenue & community pressures around these homes remaining empty for long periods of time & for these homes to be brought into use more quickly to meet housing needs in the City.
- 62.4 The Cabinet Member reported that with regard to Brookmead & Preston Road; following an initial meeting with the Leader & Housing Commissioning, there had been an approach to Housing Commissioning for a follow up meeting on investment options for refurbishment (on leasehold disposal) and new build on sites which they wished to discuss with their potential investors.
- 62.5 Councillor Farrow asked if there were figures for empty properties outside of the council's ownership. The Head of Housing Strategy replied that there were 953 long term empty properties. 38% had been empty for more than a year. Officers were working with owners and landlords to try to get these properties back in use as soon as possible.

Empty properties - HCA bid - Bringing empty homes back into use

- 62.6 The Cabinet Member reported that as part of the Coalition Housing Strategy, c £80m had been set aside for tackling empty properties from within the 2012-15 Affordable Homes Programme. This was for empty homes that would not be brought back into use

without financial intervention. The council proposed to respond by leading a sub regional bid across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex (district & boroughs).

62.7 The Council also proposed to support a Co-op bid, Co-operative Housing in Brighton & Hove (CHIBAH). The Council also aimed to work with Parity Trust on Empty Property Loans: Parity had agreed to work with BHCC & BEST partners in support of the bid. Parity were a not for profit community finance provider who currently had a contract with all BEST authorities for provision of Home Improvement Loans. The Council aimed to deliver 30 empty homes back into use under this programme per annum, bidding up to £750k per year.

62.8 Councillor Farrow asked if a site had been identified for co-operative housing. He was very interested in this development and would like to be updated with any further information. The Cabinet Member replied that no formal decision had been made on the site yet. She would keep Councillor Farrow informed and would invite him to any relevant meetings on this matter.

63. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

63.1 **RESOLVED** – That all items be reserved for discussion.

64. PETITIONS

64.1 There were none.

65. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

65.1 There were none.

66. DEPUTATIONS

66.1 There were none.

67. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

67.1 There were none.

68. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

68.1 There were none.

69. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

69.1 There were none.

70. UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF THE WIDER WELFARE REFORM AGENDA

70.1 The Cabinet Member received a presentation from the Head of City Services which set out the major changes that would occur as a result of the wider welfare reform agenda.

The presentation also highlighted the impact of the changes on the private rented sector and on council and social housing. PowerPoint slides were circulated at the meeting.

- 70.2 Councillor Farrow stated that he hoped that the Cabinet Member had spoken to the Leader of the Council about having some strategies in place to protect the people of the city.
- 70.3 The Cabinet Member replied that strategies were being discussed. The Head of City Services explained that this matter had been discussed at the Strategic Leadership Board twice and a scoping and planning meeting was imminent for how the Council worked across the City to manage and communicate this. Officers were working hard on collecting data about potential impact and were working with colleagues across the Council to plan for the changes.
- 70.4 Councillor Farrow asked how these changes would be communicated to residents. The Cabinet Member stressed the importance of communication to allow residents to prepare for the changes.
- 70.5 The Head of City Services stated that officers were aware of this issue and had written to the 25-34 age group a number of times (this group would only be eligible for single room rent from January 2012). Officers had also phoned round to ensure that people understood the changes that were taking place. A third of this age group had made arrangements to live elsewhere before the changes took place. Some were making other arrangements. She was very aware that people needed time to plan.
- 70.6 Councillor Peltzer Dunn commended the Head of City Services for her briefing.
- 70.7 The Cabinet Member stated that she had asked the Head of City Services to come back to update the Cabinet Member Meeting in a couple of months.
- 70.8 The Head of City Services informed members that if they had any questions about these issues they were welcome to email her.

71. PROCUREMENT OF HOUSING & ADULT SOCIAL CARE ADAPTATIONS FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

- 71.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which sought Cabinet approval for the tendering of a framework agreement to provide for minor and major adaptations in council homes and in private sector housing in Brighton & Hove. The report was submitted to the Cabinet Member Meeting for information.
- 71.2 The Cabinet Member stated that the framework agreement was good news. It would be helpful for Housing and Adult Social Care to have a joined up approach.
- 71.3 The Operations Manager/Housing Adaptations OT Team presented the report. She stated that the consultation included representatives of the Tenant Disability Network and the Federation of Disabled People.

- 71.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the recommendations. He asked when the timetable for implementation would be in place. The Operations Manager replied that this would be in place by late summer/autumn.
- 71.5 Councillor Farrow asked how the arrangements and partnership with Mears Ltd could work on the Decent Homes project. The Operations Manager replied that there had been joint working with Mears already. There were a number of questions added to the Decent Homes checklist to help identify new needs, someone with a disability not already known to the housing adaptations service and where replacing like for like would not meet the long term need. Cases with the housing adaptations OT team were being cross referenced against the Decent Homes Programme. Adaptations were being picked up at this time.
- 71.6 The Cabinet Member stressed that the whole idea of adaptations was to promote equity for disabled people to allow them to have more independence in their homes and community.
- 71.7 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that the report would be considered by Cabinet on the 19 January, 2012.
- 72. ADDITIONAL LICENSING FOR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) CONSULTATION & AMENDMENT OF STANDARDS FOR LICENSED HMOS.**
- 72.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which gave an update on the progress of consultation on the proposal to introduce additional licensing for smaller HMOs in the wards identified. This included information & feedback gathered to date as part of the initial evidence gathering stage.
- 72.2 Councillor Farrow thanked the Head of Housing Strategy and his colleagues for the helpful briefing for councillors on this issue. He stressed that there was an expanding problem with HMO's. Councillor Farrow stressed that there had been a resistance from some landlords and letting agents to improving their properties. There were now all kinds of people living in multi-occupancy and some landlords were allowing stock to fall into poor condition. He welcomed the work that was going ahead.
- 72.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked questions relating to the consultation. He referred to paragraph 3.16 on page 34 of the agenda and asked why the initial evidence gathered was not considered fit for purpose. The Head of Housing Strategy replied that there was new guidance for Local Authorities on how to carry out peer reviews. As a result, it was thought that it would be an improvement to carry out visits to the same people to gather more evidence.
- 72.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 3.17 of the report. He questioned the wording of the second bullet point, which appeared to exclude people who were opposed to additional licensing. It was agreed that the wording should be appropriately altered.

- 72.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 3.15 bullet point 5. “Many (private tenants) cited concerns that the costs would be past to them.” He stressed that information should be passed to them. He was concerned with the new consultation document and stated that it would have been helpful to have sight of it before it was sent out. Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 3.18 (Action 2 – Evidence Analysis). He asked why this did not state that the process would be based on the final consultation findings. The Head of Housing Strategy replied that this section would be made clearer.
- 72.6 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked about the definition of an HMO. The Head of Housing Strategy replied that there were many definitions of HMO’s but for the purpose of the report it was based on occupiers of the property concerned. He would send further information on this matter to Councillor Peltzer Dunn.
- 72.7 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the update on the progress of consultation on the proposal to introduce additional licensing for smaller HMOs in the wards identified be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that there is authority under the existing scheme of delegation for the Strategic Director Place to extend consultation on additional HMO licensing of HMOs of two or more storeys and three or more occupiers in the wards identified and on proposed changes to the Brighton & Hove City Council Standards for Licensable HMOs between January 2012 and March 2012.
- (3) That it be noted that the fees for existing mandatory HMO licences remain unchanged for 2012/13.

73. INTERREG IVA LEARNING CITIES BID

- 73.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which sought approval and endorsement for participation in the Interreg IVa Learning Cities Project.
- 73.2 The Cabinet Member stated that this was a good news story. The project strengthened neighbourhoods and removed barriers for learning in neighbourhoods.
- 73.3 The Social Inclusion Manager presented the report and explained that the Learning Cities bid was successfully appraised and agreed at the end of November, with formal notification received in early December 2011. Match funding would be identified from existing resources within the HRA. The funding would pay for two Learning Participation Workers who would focus on wider outreach work. They would be working with people on a one to one basis. The funding would also provide training for staff and residents.
- 73.4 **RESOLVED** - (1) That city council participation in the Interreg Iva Learning Cities Project be approved and endorsed.

The meeting concluded at 5.14pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

